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it is used for the growing of vegetables, specially fruit-bearing creepers, and throughout the year it is used by the household fowls. Similarly, in most of these houses the cattle-shed is very close to the main living-room. Hardly half a dozen houses in the village have latrines; the majority of the people go out into the fields or behind the rocks for answering the call of nature. Notwithstanding some variety, the decorative designs found on all the houses follow a generally established pattern. The floors are swept twice every day in almost all the houses. The mud floor is periodically smeared with cow-dung mixed with water and the walls are washed annually with lime or coloured earth. Grain and provisions are stored in large receptacles made either by the potter and well burnt to a vermilion red or by the Erkala in their traditional styles of basket-work.

All the houses in Shamirpet can be classed into one of these three types. The Gudse-type huts of the Erkalas are, however, a class by themselves. These small, circular huts, made from sheets of weed-matting, are about twenty feet in diameter and are often only six feet high. The interior is unpartitioned and serves as bedroom, dining-room, living-room and kitchen. Pigs and poultry are housed in similar but smaller round huts built in the immediate vicinity of the dwelling-hut.

From time to time groups of families belonging to the nomadic castes come to the village. These have their low, portable huts, which are mostly made of folding bamboo screens. Almost every month some group belonging to this category makes its appearance in Shamirpet and after a stay of a week or so moves off with its huts, dogs and pigs.

5. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF SHAMIRPET

The nearness of Shamirpet to the cities of Hyderabad and Secundrabad has been mentioned. People holding small government posts or having urban relations make periodic visits to the city. Others, especially young men, cycle down to Secundrabad or Hyderabad to visit the cinema or to look at the shops.

In the broad social sense, however, Shamirpet's more intimate ties are with the villages in the neighbourhood. In the events and developments of these villages the people of Shamirpet are very keenly interested. The hamlets of Babugura and Upparpalli are

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621 in fact entered as parts of the village of Shamirpet in government records, and in a sense they are; nevertheless, on a restricted scale 623 they enjoy considerable autonomy. The elders of the hamlets try, as far as possible, to decide the hamlet's minor disputes without referring them either to the headman or to the village council of Shamirpet. They say, 'We are poor inhabitants of a small hamlet. Our resources are limited. The people of Shamirpet are prosperous; they have adopted the ways of the city. If we refer our cases to them, they will impose such fines that our necks will break.' Yet there are many cases in which one of the disputing parties, dissatisfied with the judgement of the elders and possessing the necessary financial resources or influential support, will refer the case to the Shamirpet village council. In all such cases one or two elders and influential people from the hamlet in question are summoned to attend the proceedings of the village council at Shamirpet. Similarly, for all the ceremonies organized jointly by the people of Shamirpet as a whole it is customary to send invitations to Babugura and Upparpalli and it is expected that they will be represented by at least some of the village elders. [631] When the people of the village as a whole are summoned on government business to the district or subdivisional headquarters, the residents of the two hamlets have also to accompany the people of Shamirpet, for all the three settlements are, according to government records, 621 component units of one village. However, the distance between Shamirpet and the two hamlets is an effective barrier to the pursuance of a common social life. And from this point of view the two hamlets are as independent as two self-contained small villages.

361 The area surrounding Shamirpet is quite densely populated. It ●574 is not unusual to find a village or a small hamlet every three to six [illegible] and Shamirpet is surrounded by a number of villages, some large and others small. With most of these, Shamirpet, as a village, has very little to do. However, individual residents remain in constant touch with friends and relations in the surrounding villages. Ceremonies connected with the major crises of life, i.e. birth, marriage and death, often take people out of Shamirpet to the neighbouring villages, or bring people from there 564 into Shamirpet. For a more or less well-defined block of villages the different castes have their respective caste councils, to which matters concerning the caste only are taken.